

1908.]

Kroeber, Ethnology of the Gros Ventre.

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sometimes put on the bow with glue made from boiled skin from the head of a buffalo. Sometimes the bow was without sinew backing and sometimes ornamented by being covered on the back with snake-skin. Bows are said to have been held either horizontally or vertically, according to individual habit. Arrows for war and hunting are said to have been alike. 41/

Shields were made of the thickest part of buffalo-bull skin, which was laid into a hole in the ground and made hard by being scorched with hot rocks placed upon it. It was then provided with a cover of white buckskin fringed with feathers. A man who carried a shield in war sometimes had no other weapon. 74

It is declared that no tobacco was raised, and that none growing wild was gathered, but that it was obtained from other tribes and from the whites. This is contrary to the practice of the equally non-agricultural Blackfoot, who planted tobacco; but it would seem to accord with the lack of any information obtained from the Arapaho as to tobacco-raising. 171 249 [439]

DECORATIVE ART.

The present day decorative art of the Gros Ventre is not nearly as strongly developed as that of the Arapaho. There is much less bead-work made, and this hardly ever equals the better work of the Arapaho either in technical or artistic excellence. Quill-embroidery is also found less frequently than among the Arapaho. How far this greater poverty and inferiority of Gros Ventre decorative art are matters of some standing in time is not certain; but it seems probable that there was a difference between the two tribes in this respect, even when they first came into contact with the whites. 53/ 171

It is in accord with this difference that inquiry as to the symbolic or conventional significance of the decorative designs used by the Gros Ventre has been practically without result. While the failure of the Gros Ventre to render such interpretations is due perhaps in large measure to change of mode of life under the influence of civilization, yet it seems that in this respect too there must have been a temperamental difference between the Arapaho and Gros Ventre, even in earlier times; for the Arapaho preserve at least distinguished wrecks of their symbolism, ceremonies, and religious life, while among the Gros Ventre, who are in much less intimate contact with the Americans, these things have vanished, leaving often scarcely a trace, and rarely more than a memory.

Partly on account of comparative scarcity of material, and also by reason of greater artistic poverty, the decoration of the Gros Ventre does not present as many typical characteristics as that of the Arapaho, the Blackfeet, the

The Feathered Pipe and Other Pipes

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been previously described. Some additional data on tobacco and wild parsley as associated with the Feathered Pipe help fill out the picture.

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The keeper of the Feathered Pipe raised tobacco, as did the very first keeper, whose tobacco patch was raided by the people after the great war exploit of his son, He-Who-Dreams-of-Bha'a.

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If anyone but the keeper [or co-keeper] touched the "wild parsley" root the delinquent would get fits, out of which he could be brought only by the keeper working on him and "blowing this same stuff on him." Old Deafie did not believe all this and there were other skeptics, some of whom, even small boys, would touch "wild parsley" to test out the belief and would immediately have fits. Al Chandler had heard of many such cases, although he had never seen any himself.

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Sitting High used always to carry a couple of pinches of wild parsley in a little buckskin pouch in his pocket to use against rattlesnakes. On one occasion when Al Chandler was about 18 years old he and his grandfather (Sitting High) were at Henry Martin's place on the Hays side of the Bear Paws. Al was eating cherries at the creek bank, saw a big rattlesnake, and shouted to his grandfather. The latter imitated the snake's angry rattle, wet the end of a six-foot willow stick and stuck it in a small bit of wild parsley, then touched the snake with this end, and so "knocked the snake stiff." Some time later Al went to the spot to look and there he found the rattler dead, "bloated and stinking." Al Chandler, on another occasion, near Snake Butte, saw his grandfather kill a rattler in the same manner, merely touching it with the wet parsley-treated end of a stick.

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Among the skeptics was Little Man, son of Sitting High and Al's adoptive father. He would even eat "wild parsley." On one occasion, Little Man took Jimmy, Al's three or four-year-old son, with him to the creek to wash, and while there was about to give Jimmy a bit of the wild parsley to eat, "to give him the power to use," when Al happened to see what was going on and told Jimmy: "Don't, that is poison." Little Man laughed and said: "It won't hurt him. I am giving it to him. I was going to give him this power. What is the matter with you? Why don't you eat it?" But Al said: